The arts pertaining to weapons and munitions of war spread now over a wide field. In the line on which they were started by the introduction of gunpowder they have made great advances in the hands of different nations of Europe. With no essential change, of the kind which took place when gunpowder artillery came into use, the minute improvements in execution, and careful attention to accuracy, in modern times, and particularly in the present century, have made changes nearly as important. Great as the difference between the old and the new war engines, in the days when they worked together, as great probably are the differences of another kind between Bábar's *firingí* field-pieces at Pánípat and the Armstrongs of the present day.

Were the Sundarbans inhabited in ancient times?—*By* H. Beveridge, B. C. S.

This is a question which has excited a great deal of attention. The Bengali mind as being prone to the marvellous and to the exaltation of the past at the expense of the present, has answered the question in the affirmative and maintained the view that there were formerly large cities in the Sundarbans. Some Bengalis also have suggested that the present desolate condition of the Sundarbans is due to subsidence of the last, and that this may have been contemporaneous with the formation of the submarine hollow known as the "Swatch of no ground". It seems to me, however, to be very doubtful indeed that the Sundarbans were ever largely peopled, and still more so that their inhabitants lived in cities or were otherwise civilized. As regards the eastern half of the Sundarbans, namely, that which lies in the districts of Bákirganj and Noákhálí and includes Sondíp and the other islands in the estuary of the Megna, it seems to me that the fact of so much salt having been manufactured there in old times militates against the view of extensive cultivation; for the salt could not have been made without a great expenditure of fuel, which of course implies the existence of large tracts of jungle. Du Jarric speaks of Sondíp as being able to supply the whole of Bengal with salt, and it seems evident that in old times salt was reckoned as the most valuable production of this part of the country. How inimical this must have been to a widespread cultivation of the neighbouring tracts may be judged of from the fact that in modern times the salt manufacture by Government was a great obstacle to the clearing and colonization of the churs and islands, as the Government officers insisted on the jungles being maintained for salt-manufacture. The zamíndárs also of Dakhin Shahbázpur obtained, as I have elsewhere stated, a large reduction of their land revenue on account of part of their lands being taken up for the use of the salt works.

Sondíp itself was, it is true, cultivated in Cæsar Frederick's time (1569), but so it is now, and there is no reason to suppose that its civilization was greater then than it is at present. It may have, but then it certainly had, some thirty or forty years later, one or two Forts, which were marks of insecurity rather than of prosperity, and which do not exist now, simply because the Aracanese and the Portuguese pirates are no longer formidable. Ralph Fitch visited Bacola in 1586, and describes the country as being very great and fruitful. He does not, however, expressly say that Bacola was a city, and it is possible that the people lived then as now in detached houses, and did not lodge together in any great town or mart. But even if we take the words "the houses be very fair and high builded, the streets large" (a most unlikely thing in any oriental city) to mean that there was a city of Bacola and give full credence to Fitch's statements, the next clause of the description, *viz.*, "the people naked, except a little cloth about their waist" does not suggest the existence of much civilization or refinement.

Moreover, there is nothing to show that Bacola was in what are now known as the Sundarbans. It probably was the same as Kochúá, which, according to tradition, was the old seat of the Chandradíp Rájás. But Kochúá is at this day one of the most fertile and best cultivated parts of Bákirganj, and is the only place in the south of the district which contains a large Hindu population. No doubt there has been a great amount of diluviation near Kochúá, and the river between the mainland and Dakhin Shahbázpur has become much wider than it was in old times. In this way the old city of Bakla and much of its territory may have disappeared, and to this extent there probably has been a decay of civilization, but this is a different thing from the supposition that the tract now existing as forest was formerly inhabited by a civilized people. It seems to me also that Fitch cannot have been a very observant traveller, as otherwise he would have noticed the terrible storm which overwhelmed Bakla only a year or two before his visit, and that therefore we should not press his statement too far. Possibly all physical traces of the storm had disappeared, but surely people must still have been telling of it, and Fitch must have heard of it if he stayed at Bakla any time or had any intercourse with the inhabitants.

Another thing which indisposes me to believe in the early colonization of the eastern part of the Sundarbans is the terrible hardships which the crew of the "Ter Schelling" suffered on this coast in 1661. The "Ter Schelling" was a Dutch vessel which sailed from Batavia for Ongueli (Hijlí) in Bengala on 3rd September, 1661, and was wrecked off the coast of Bengal in the first half of the following month. The narrative of the voyage and shipwreck, and of the subsequent adventures of the passengers and crew was written by one of them. The author was, I believe, a

Dutchman, and his account was first published at Amsterdam and afterwards at London in 1682 under the title of 'Relation of an unfortunate voyage to the kingdom of Bengala'. The passengers and crew seem to have landed on an island near Sondíp, and their sufferings from hunger were most terrible. They were compelled to live on most disgusting objects such as a putrid buffalo, a dead tortoise, "leganes", serpents, snails, and the leaves of trees, and to drink salt water. They saw very few inhabitants, and those whom they did come across seemed to be almost as poor and miserable as themselves and to have been driven out from more civilized regions. They were several times on the eve of resorting to cannibalism, but eventually they got to Sondíp, where they were kindly treated and sent on to Bulwa (Bhaluá). The prince of Bulwa was also kind to them, and sent them on to Decke (Dháká), where they were impressed and made to serve in the war under Mír Jumlah against Asám. Unfortunately the author does not clearly indicate the site of the shipwreck, but it was evidently somewhere on the sea coast of the Sundarbans. The people whom he met, or at least some of them, appear to have been Muhammadans, for they used the expression 'salaam'.

In Professor Blochmann's Contributions to the Geography of Bengal, No. I. (J. A. S. B., 1873, Pt. I., p. 227), reference is made to Van den Broucke's map in Valentyn's work as showing the place where the "Ter Schelling" was wrecked.

I may also notice here that the copper-plate inscription found at Ídilpur in Báḳirganj, and described in the Asiatic Society's Journal for 1838, seems to imply that the inhabitants of that part of the country belonged to a degraded tríbe called the Chandabhandas—a fact which is not favourable to the supposition of an early civilization of the Sundarbans.*

By far the most interesting account of the Sundarbans is contained in the letters of the Jesuit priests who visited Bakla and Jessore in 1599 and 1600. Their letters were published by Nicolas Pimenta and have been translated into Latin and French. I was indebted for my introduction to them to my friend Dr. Wise, who told me that they were quoted in Purchas's Pilgrimage. Extracts from the letters and the subsequent history of the mission are also given by Pierre Du Jarric in his 'Histoire des choses plus mémorables advenues aux Indes Orientales', Bordeaux, 1608-14.

It appears that Pimenta, who was a Jesuit visitor and stationed at Goa, sent two priests, Fernandez and Josa, to Bengal in 1598. They left Cochin on 3rd May, 1598, and arrived in eighteen days at the Little Port (Porto Pequino). From thence they went up the river to Gullo or Goli,

* *Vide*, however, Mr. Westmacott's remarks on this name, J. A. S. B., 1875, Pt. I, p. 6.

where they arrived eight days after leaving the 'Little Port'. While at Gullo, they were invited by the Rájá of a place, called Chandecan (in Italian Ciandecan), to pay him a visit, and accordingly Fernandez sent Josa there, and he was favourably received by the king. One year after these two priests had left Cochin, Pimenta sent two other priests, namely, Melchin de Fonseca and Andrew Bowes, to Bengal, and they arrived at Chittagong or at Dianga some time in 1599. On 22nd December, 1599, Fernandez wrote from Srípur, giving an account to Pimenta of the success of the mission, and on the 20th January, 1600, Fonseca wrote from Chandecan, giving an account of a journey which he had made from Dianga to Chandecan by way of Bakla. Fonseca's letter is most interesting. He describes how he came to Bacola, and how well the king received him, and how he gave him letters patent, authorising him to establish churches, &c., throughout his dominions. He says that the king of Bakla was not above eight years of age, but that he had a discretion surpassing his years. The king "after compliments asked me where I was bound for, and I replied that I was going to the king of Ciandecan, *who is to be the father-in-law of your Highness.* These last words seem to me to be very important, for the king of Ciandecan was, as I shall afterwards show, no other than the famous Pratápaditya of Jessore, and therefore this boy-king of Bakla must have been Rámchandra Rái, who we know married Pratápaditya's daughter. Fonseca then proceeds to describe the route from Bakla to Chandecan and I shall give this in the original Italian.

Il viaggio di Bacolá sin a Ciandecan è il piu fresco, delitioso ch'io mai vedessi, per i varii fiumi con alberi alle rive ch' irrigano il paese, e per vedersi da una parte correre numerose schiave di cervi, per l'altra pascere moltitudine di vacche; lascio le campagne spatiose di viso, e li molti canneti di canne mele, gli sciami d'api per gli alberi, e le simi andar saltando da uno albero all' altro e altri particolarita di grande ricreatione a viandanti. Non mancono però Tigri e Crocodili che si pascono di carne humana, per trascuragine, e peri peccoti d' alcuni. Sono ancora per quelle selve Rinoceroti ma io non ne ho visto veruno."

Now though the good father evidently had an eye for natural scenery and was delighted with the woods and rivers, it is evident that what he admired so much must have appeared to many to be "horrid jungle", and was very like what the Sundarbans now are. In fact, a great part of this description of the route from Bakla to Ciandecan is still applicable to the journey from Barísál to Kálíganj, near which Pratápaditya's capital was situated. The chief difference is, that the progress of civilization has driven away the herds of deer and the monkeys from the ordinary routes, though they are still to be found in the woods, and the deer have given their name to one of the largest of the Sundarban rivers (the Haringháṭá). The

faithfulness of Fonseca's description seems indicated by his modestly admitting that he had never seen a rhinoceros, while stating (quite truly) that there were such animals in the forest. Had he come upon any town on his route, it is reasonable to suppose that he would have mentioned it. Fonseca arrived at Ciandecan on the 20th November, and then he found Fernandez's companion Dominic de Josa, who must either have been left there by Fernandez in 1598, or had returned some time afterwards. The king received Fonseca with great kindness—so much so, that he says he does not think a Christian prince could have behaved better. A church was built at Ciandecan, and this was the first ever erected in Bengal and was as such dedicated to Jesus Christ. Chittagong was the second, and then came the church at Bandel, which was erected by a Portuguese named Villalobos.

The fair prospects of the mission as described by Fernandez and Fonseca were soon overclouded. Fernandez died in November 1602 in prison at Chittagong, after he had been shamefully ill-used and deprived of the sight of an eye; the king of Ciandecan proved a traitor, and killed Carvalho the Portuguese Commander, and drove out the Jesuit priests. Leaving these matters, however, for the present, let us first answer the question, Where was Ciandecan? I reply that it is identical with Pratápaditya's capital of Dhúmghát, and that it was situated in the 24-Parganahs and near the modern Kálíganj. My reasons for this view are first that Chandecan or Ciandecan is evidently the same as Chánd Khán, and we know from the history of Rájá Pratápaditya by Rám Rám Bosu (modernised by Harish Tarkalankar) that this was the old name of the property in the Sundarbans, which Pratápaditya's father Vikramáditya got from king Dáúd. Chánd Khán, we are told, had died without heirs, and so Vikramáditya got the property. And there is nothing in this contradictory to the fact that Jessore formerly belonged to Khánja 'Alí [Khán Jahán]; for Khánja 'Alí died in 1459, or about 120 years before Vikramáditya came to Jessore, so that the latter must have succeeded to some descendant of Khánja 'Alí, and he may very well have borne the name of Chánd Khán. When the Jesuit priests visited Ciandecan, Pratápaditya cannot have been very long on the throne, and therefore the old name of the locality (Chánd Khán) may still have clung to it.

But besides this, Du Jarric tells us that after Fernandez had been killed at Chittagong in 1602, the Jesuit priests went to Sondíp, but they soon left it and went with Carvalho the Portuguese Commander to Ciandecan. The king of Ciandecan promised to befriend them, but in fact he was determined to kill Carvalho, and thereby make friends with the king of Arakan, who was then very powerful, and had already taken possession of the kingdom of Bakla. The king therefore sent for Carvalho to "*Jasor*", and there had him murdered. The news reached Ciandecan, says Du Jarric,

at midnight, and this perhaps may give us some idea of the distance of the two places.

I do not think that I need add anything to these remarks except that I had omitted to mention that Fernandez visited Ciandecan in October, 1599, and got letters patent from the king. As an additional precaution, Fernandez obtained permission from the king to have these letters also signed by the king's son, who was then a boy of twelve years of age. The boy may have been Udayaditya, and so he must have been only three or four years older than Rámchandra Rái of Bakla.

I must not omit to point out that the fact that Vikramáditya chose Jessore as a safe retreat as the strongest possible evidence of the jungly nature of the surrounding country. It is true it had been cultivated in the previous century by Khánja 'Alí, but the experiment had proved a failure, and the land had in the time of his successor (?) Chánd Khán relapsed into jungle.

To sum up, it seems to me that the Sundarbans have never been in a more flourishing condition than they are in at present. I believe that large parts of Báḳirganj and Jessore were at one time cultivated, that they relapsed into jungle, and that they have soon been cleared again, and I have also no doubt that the courts of the kings of Bakla and of Ciandecan imparted some degree of splendour to the surrounding country. But I do not believe that the gloomy Sundarbans on the surface of Jessore and Báḳirganj were ever well peopled or the sites of cities.

On Human Sacrifices in Ancient India.—By Rájendralála Mitra, LL. D.

Nothing can be more abhorrent to modern civilization than the idea of slaughtering human victims for the propitiation of the great Father of the universe; yet, looking to the character of the different systems of religion which governed the conscience of man in primitive times, it would by no means be unreasonable to assume *à priori* that such an idea should have been pretty common, if not universal.

The tendency to assign human attributes to the Divinity was a marked peculiarity in almost all systems of religion that then got into currency. The ideal of God was derived from the concrete man. The attributes were doubtless magnified manifold, but their character remained the same—they differed only in degree, but not in kind. A being of unlimited power, of profound erudition, of great subtlety, was what the untutored finite mind of man could conceive in its aspirations to grasp the infinite; and as those aspi-